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SUBJECT: FIRST LADY LAURA BUSH,S VISIT TO UAE SCORES PUBLIC
DIPLOMACY VICTORY, LAUNCHES BREAST CANCER CAMPAIGN

Summary

1. (U) In an historic October 21-23 visit to the United Arab Emirates, First Lady of the United States Laura Bush scored a public diplomacy victory while helping to launch the first nation-wide UAE campaign for breast cancer awareness. Mrs. Bush was hosted for a gala luncheon by the "Mother of the Nation" Sheikha Fatima and witnessed the eagerness of UAE officials to share their views on the country,s social progress while highlighting women,s education, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, and breast cancer awareness. The excellent cooperation which the U.S. enjoys with the UAE was reinforced and expanded by the First Lady's visit, during the course of which a Memorandum of Understanding/licensing agreement was signed between the Komen Foundation for the Cure and the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi. Mrs. Bush also participated in the U.S.-UAE business launch of &Making it our Business8 workplace awareness campaign in Dubai. End summary.

Impact of Visit

2. (SBU) First Lady Laura Bush's visit to Abu Dhabi and Dubai drew attention to a disease which, until now, has to a large degree been concealed in a veil of shame and secrecy. Simultaneous to the visit was a UAEG campaign to educate women about breast cancer and to raise awareness in a conservative Muslim society where victims of the disease are sometimes abandoned by their husbands and their daughters may be considered unmarriageable. Mrs. Bush lent her voice to an historic campaign aimed at educating women in order to save their lives.

3. (U) The awareness campaign has already been effective. A husband who heard a breast cancer awareness campaign ad on the radio urged his wife to do a self-exam. In doing so, she found a lump and went to the doctor the following day. She indeed had cancer, but because of this early detection and available treatment facilities, she had likely saved her own life. Another story featured in the local press tells of a husband who shaved his head to show support for his wife who had lost her hair while undergoing chemotherapy. The UAEG campaign was heavily promoted in the press and marketed throughout the emirates through free-standing, pink booths in malls and major supermarkets where educational pamphlets are distributed and appointments made for free mammograms. A breast cancer walk was also held October 22 along the Abu Dhabi Corniche, where pink banners and majlis-style tents were installed along the entire pathway. Hundreds of national women in black abayas adorned with pink marched followed by supporters: sons, husbands, and fathers. Expatriates joined the walk as well, but the event was significant for the number of Emirati nationals participating.

Highlights of Abu Dhabi Visit

14. (SBU) The First Lady's schedule began with a conversation October 22 with twelve young female university students from across the UAE, who had attended USG programs such as MEPI's Student Leadership and Women in Technology programs, as well as State/ECA's International Visitor programs. Students were enthusiastic and broached issues such as shared values and how visiting the U.S. had completely changed their perspectives on America. The First Lady agreed that more exchanges and joint programs are necessary to build mutual understanding between our two cultures. Students were visibly affected by the warmth of and interest from the First Lady, and offered to talk to and encourage other students hoping to visit the U.S.

15. (U) PINK MAJLIS AT SHEIKH KHALIFA MEDICAL CITY: Created by Dr. Trish Snozyk and her staff, the concept of the "Pink Majlis" was a culturally acceptable setting for women to gather and share stories of cancer survival. Breast cancer survivors shared their stories with Mrs. Bush inside the privacy of the majlis tent, custom-made of bright pink fabric and hanging flowers. After the event, several of the women wept as they thanked Embassy staff for providing the chance for Mrs. Bush to lend her voice to this very personal and often devastating issue. In a country where cultural stigma often prevent early treatment, thus making the majority of cases which come before doctors already at advanced stages of the disease, Mrs. Bush's visit to the Pink Majlis propelled the issue to a new level of exposure, providing unprecedented assistance to previously silent victims. (Note: SKMC is managed by the U.S.-based Cleveland Clinic. End note.)

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16. (SBU) Mrs. Bush also witnessed a signing ceremony for an MOU between the Susan G. Komen Foundation for the Cure and the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi deepening U.S.-UAE partnership on breast cancer awareness. The event was widely covered by UAE and U.S. press and was attended by Robin Roberts of ABC's "Good Morning America" and Greta Van Susteren of FOX News, who interviewed Mrs. Bush during the visit.

17. (U) Both the Pink Majlis and the university event demonstrated the energy and dedication of Emirati women taking on social issues with vigor and a vision of the future they seek for their country, as well as a sense of appreciation for the First Lady's boost to their efforts.

Sheikha Fatima Hosts Luncheon

18. (SBU) Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Kitbi, the late President Sheikh Zayed's widow and "Mother of the Nation," hosted a luncheon for Mrs. Bush at her splendid Bahar (Sea) Palace. Sheikha Fatima's invitation epitomized the keen interest of the First Lady's Emirati hosts in joining the efforts of women in the U.S. to promote a public campaign against breast cancer. Also in attendance at the lunch were 22 members of the Higher National Committee for Breast Cancer Control and nine female representatives from the UAE's Federal National Council.

19. (SBU) First Lady Laura Bush praised Sheikha Fatima's continued support for all projects concerning women. Sheikha Fatima's support has given a tremendous boost to coordination among many different organizations working together on the breast cancer partnership. She and Mrs. Bush, with their emphasis on the expansion of the U.S.-UAE partnership, have deepened (and will continue to bolster) efforts to engage women throughout the region on projects highlighting their economic empowerment and civic participation in health initiatives.

¶10. (SBU) Other prominent women the First Lady met while in Abu Dhabi included: Minister of Economy Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid al-Qassimi, Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan (wife of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed), Sheikha Alyazia bint Seif (wife of Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed), Sheikha Shamsa bint Hamdan (wife of Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed), Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid (wife of Minister for Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed), Chair of the Higher National Committee on Breast Cancer Dr. Omniyat al Hajeri, and head of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce Businesswomen's Council Dr. Rowda al Mutawa.

Dubai Events

¶11. (SBU) In a well-attended October 22 event hosted by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), the First Lady, accompanied by HRH Princess Haya bint Hussein, wife of UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, recounted the launching of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research one year prior and spoke on the gains in women's health made over time in the U.S. and the UAE. Citing a growing recognition that corporate social responsibility should include health issues, the First Lady announced the &Making it Our Business⁸ breast cancer workplace awareness program. She commended the 11 leading U.S. and UAE companies in Dubai that have signed on as &charter members⁸ to the program: five U.S. firms -- General Motors, General Electric, Federal Express, Microsoft, and Johnson & Johnson; and six Emirati companies: leading Dubai parastatals Dubai Holdings, Dubai World, and EMAAR, and large local companies the Al Tayer Group (Gulf News, Ford, Harvey Nichols); the Al Gurg Group (Seimens, Dunlop) and the Al Ghurair Group (the Burjuman shopping mall, a longtime breast cancer awareness sponsor). The First Lady pointed out that "being compassionate and being profitable goes hand-in-hand" in the event. Princess Haya also spoke about the importance of increasing breast cancer awareness in the region.

¶12. (U) Comment: Dubai is an economic powerhouse and a tolerant regional commercial hub which has consciously sought to set a tone of moderation and to encourage modernization in the Middle East. It offers a natural platform for engaging companies in the field of breast cancer awareness, playing host to a multitude of nationalities and industries. As such, the First Lady's announcement was an opportunity to

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reinforce her message to a diverse and attentive audience. The three Dubai parastatals that have signed on to the program are among the biggest companies in the Middle East and are together the economic driving force in Dubai.

¶13. The announcement of the &Making it our Business⁸ campaign garnered significant positive press, and real interest by these Dubai firms in systematic follow-up to implement the program. This extensive media coverage dovetailed with recent Dubai efforts to step up corporate social responsibility.

Media Coverage

¶14. (SBU) Media interest was high and coverage was robust. Al-Arabiya and CNBC Arabiya attended and reported on the press conference. Other local television situations, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah TV, took and used feed from the state media organ, WAM. Tuesday morning papers each had multiple articles spread over multiple pages, with numerous pictures from various events. The tone was positive to the point of laudatory. English language Gulf News banner headlined Mrs. Bush's &tribute⁸ to one of the cancer survivors who participated in the majlis, with an above the

fold photo from the event. Semi-official Arabic Al-Ittihad daily highlighted the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi-Susan G. Komen agreement and declared that &Sheikha Fatima and Laura Bush Seek Cooperation Among Women,s Organizations.⁸ Arabic Al-Khaleej,s interior spread bore a triple-headline invoking Mrs. Bush, Sheikha Fatima and Princess Haya in a common call to increase awareness and combat cancer.

Strengthening Overall Ties

¶15. (SBU) With traditionally strong bilateral ties binding the UAE to the U.S. across many fronts, Mrs. Bush,s visit scored a public diplomacy victory emphasizing themes of friendship, cooperation, and women's education with special focus on those who are vulnerable in our societies. The visit highlighted efforts aimed at bringing women's health to the forefront of UAE social development efforts.

¶16. (U) This message was cleared by White House staff.
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